

The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS



Child Care Issues and Your Workplace

More and more employees are struggling harder than ever to balance the demands of their work and home lives. Studies show that working parents have an increasing rate of absenteeism as they search for child care, juggle school holidays, care for sick children, adjust for sick child care providers, schedule school conferences, and respond to the unexpected.

Nationwide, employers are studying the costs of offering various work/family programs and some businesses are responding to the conflict between work demands and family responsibilities. You may want to check if your employer offers family friendly initiatives to balance work and family commitments. Wherever you work, the following information may help you and your employer.

Meeting Your Child Care Needs

The first step is to consider exactly what kind of help you need. Would changing your work schedule by half an hour mean that you could get to work on time and pick up your children before the center closes? Do you need an occasional morning off for parent conferences and pediatric appointments? Would you be willing to work on a Saturday to cover lost time at work when your child was sick? Do you need referrals and time to visit area child care facilities? Without programs from your employer, you are more likely to be absent or late to work, or spending some work hours trying to find answers to your child care needs.

Familiarize yourself with all the family leave initiatives at your job regarding time off, sick time and flexibility in your hours at work. Determine how these policies may best fit your needs. Contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for information on successful work/family programs. These programs for parents generally fall into the following categories:

Flexible work schedules - includes flexible hours, compressed work weeks, telecommuting, job sharing, part-time schedules and voluntary reduced work time.

Financial assistance - includes vouchers or subsidies that reduce costs for child care services.

Information and referral - includes referrals to child care services and/or to your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency, newsletters, bulletin boards, and individual case management.

Direct services - on-site or nearby child care facilities, reserved slots at local centers or family day care homes, back-up or emergency care supported by your employer.

Community partnerships - arrangements with local organizations serving children and families.

The Planning Process For You and Your Manager

After you determine how to best meet your child care needs, set aside a quiet time to speak with your manager about your request. If you have more than one supervisor, decide who will be most responsive to your work and family issues. Plan ahead about what you will say and how to deliver your words in a calm manner. The better prepared you are, the more likely you will be successful.

Learn as much as possible about how others have handled their child care issues before you. For some companies, a written proposal that details your personal needs with the coverage of your responsibilities at work is important. Remain confident and enthusiastic as you explain that your proposal can benefit both you and the business. Be sure your boss understands that you are committed to doing your job well.

If there are limited or no family leave policies at your job, you might talk to your manager about what adjustments can be made to ease your work and family responsibilities. Explain to him that instead of worrying about your children, new company programs could allow you to be better focused on your work and reduce your absenteeism. Together you can discuss options that might work for both of you. Most family-oriented personnel initiatives cost little or nothing for a company to implement but do require employers to be flexible and rethink their practices. Some managers just may not know where to begin.

Speak with your manager or human resources department ahead of time about how your work can be done when you must leave work for unexpected reasons. If possible, be prepared to have more than one solution. When minor child care emergencies do arise, try to handle them with minimal disruption to your work. For larger emergencies, check in again upon your return to see if things ran smoothly. The key will be clear, ongoing communication.

Every employer will decide which benefits will be feasible to offer and most responsive to their employees' needs. It may be helpful for you to report to your manager some of the options available and the advantages for companies who offer work/family programs.

The Advantages of Work/Family Programs

Despite a growing awareness of the tension between the demands of work and family, every business must decide individually how to respond and what changes to make. Some managers may be unwilling or unable to make changes and resist requests from employees. Some employees hesitate asking their manager for flexibility or programs for child care issues for fear of reprisal. Your ability to successfully combine work and family will largely depend on who your manager is and your company's attitudes and policies. You may want to inform your manager that addressing employees' needs for help around child care issues can bring real business benefits:

- ☼ Reduced tardiness and absenteeism
- ☼ Rise in productivity and job performance
- ☼ Lower turnover
- ☼ Recruitment and retention tool
- ☼ Enhanced company image, become the employer of choice





Workplace Flexibility Options

Support for child care issues is one way employers can work with their employees to balance work and family commitments. Increasingly, businesses are offering flexible work options as a way to recruit and retain employees. It is helpful for parents to be aware of the following alternative work schedules:

Flextime- A work schedule that permits flexible starting and quitting times but generally requires a standard number of hours to be worked within a given time period.

Compressed Workweek- Full-time work scheduled in fewer than five days a week.

Regular Part-Time- Less than full-time work that includes job security and all other rights available to regular full-time workers.

Job Sharing- Two people voluntarily sharing the responsibilities of one full-time job with salary and benefits prorated.

Leave Time- Authorized periods of time away from work without loss of employment rights. May be paid or unpaid.

Work Sharing- An alternative to layoffs in which all or part of an organization's workforce temporarily reduces hours and salary. In some states this is facilitated by the availability of short-time compensation from unemployment insurance.

Flexplace- Employees working off-site. When they are linked to the workplace electronically, this option is sometimes referred to as telecommuting.

Resources

Weisberg, Anne C. and Buckler, Carol A. *Everything A Working Mother Needs To Know*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994.

Lizotte, Ken and Litwak, Barbara. *Balancing Work and Family*. New York, NY: AMALCOM, 1995.

The Work and Family Clearinghouse offers information on programs currently offered by employers across the country, referrals, state agencies and more. Write to the U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20210 or call 800-827-5335.

The Child Care Action Campaign has information guides on child care issues and company benefits. Write to 330 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 1001 or call 212-239-0138.

Websites to check:

www.cfpa.org

www.worklifemontgomery.org

www.bluesuitmom.com

www.workingwoman.com

www.bc.edu

www.awlp.org

▲ Past Issues ▲

The Daily Parent

The Daily Parent is published 4 times a year. You may view and order any of the past issues by visiting the Child Care Aware web site at www.childcareaware.org, or obtain more information by calling 202.393.5501, ext. 113 or writing dailyparent@naccrra.org.

- ✿ Off to a Great Start
- ✿ The Working Parent's Day Nine to Five... and Beyond
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- ✿ New Research on Brain Development is Important for Parents
- ✿ All in the Family – Using Relatives for Child Care
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- ✿ Backup Child Care
- ✿ Stress Relievers and Anger Prevention
- ✿ Rituals and Routines
- ✿ LET'S EAT! Children and Healthy Eating Habits



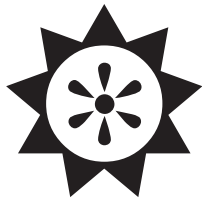
The Daily Parent is prepared by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Washington, DC with funding by the Citigroup Foundation.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION...

About choosing and using child care and before and after school care, call the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency which serves your community. To find the number of the CCR&R in your area, call: Child Care Aware 1.800.424.2246
www.childcareaware.org



**Balancing work and family is never easy.
How do you ask your manager again for
more time off?**

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE
RESOURCE AND REFERRAL AGENCIES

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